
CHAPTER 27

Teaching Strategic Reading

Joy Janzen

Mircea is a conscientious student. When he is told he will be tested on the contents of Chapter 2 in the textbook, he looks up every unknown word in the dictionary in an effort to fix the information in his memory. Despite his extended preparations, he doesn't do very well on the test, though he says he spent hours preparing. *Lia*, on the other hand, excels on the exam, but she has approached the text in a very different way. Before she reads the chapter, she skims through it, looking at subheadings and graphics so as to give herself a general idea of what the text will be about. As she reads, she connects the material in the chapter to what she already knows. She frequently asks herself questions about the text, looking back or ahead to link one part of the text to another. When she is puzzled by the content, she searches for clues in the context, tries to paraphrase, or considers what she knows about text structure. In short, *Lia* is reading like an expert, while *Mircea* is relying on just one technique. The difference between the two is in their use of reading strategies.

IMPLICATIONS OF READING STRATEGY RESEARCH FOR TEACHERS

Reading strategies can be defined as “plans for solving problems encountered in constructing meaning” (Duffy, 1993, p. 232). They range from bottom-up vocabulary strategies, such as looking up an unknown word in the dictionary, to more comprehensive actions, such as connecting what is being read to the reader's background knowledge. Research in the L1 and L2 fields has demonstrated that strategy use is different in more proficient and less proficient readers. More proficient readers use different types of strategies, and they use them in different ways (Block, 1986, 1992; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992). Moreover, reading strategies can be taught to students,

and when taught, strategies help improve student performance on tests of comprehension and recall (Carrell, 1985; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Pearson & Fielding, 1991).

But what do these research results really mean for the classroom teacher? Given that strategies can be taught, and that one goal of teaching reading is to help students develop as strategic readers, how should this teaching be carried out? Strategy instruction has been discussed in general (see, e.g., Chamot & O'Malley, 1994), but in TESOL little has been published that relates to teaching reading strategies in an ongoing classroom reading program. This is not the case, however, in the L1 field, and one answer to the pedagogical dilemma is to adapt methods that have been found successful in L1 teaching to an ESL situation. In the teaching approach of Brown and Palincsar (1989), for example, students are taught four reading strategies: summarizing, predicting, clarifying, and asking questions. Versions of this have been tried with L2 students and have been found helpful (Cotterall, 1990; Hewitt, 1995). In the L1 field today, however, state-of-the-art reading strategy instruction has moved to a more comprehensive approach.

TEACHING READING: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

What is sometimes termed the *transactional* teaching approach to strategy instruction has several characteristics that deserve attention.

1. It is embedded in a content area so that students are learning strategies while they are engaged in their regular reading for a variety of purposes.
2. Strategies are taught through direct explanation, teacher modeling, and feedback. Students are never in doubt as to what the strategies are, where and when they can be used, and how they are used. The teacher models expert behavior by reading and thinking aloud. The students also read and think aloud in class, and their strategy use is supported by teacher feedback.
3. Strategies are constantly recycled over new texts and tasks. The students encounter individual strategies and groups of strategies time and time again. In this way, students better understand the usefulness of strategies, and there is transfer of training from one type of text or task to another.
4. Strategy use develops over the long term. It is estimated that it takes several years for L2 students to develop as strategic readers (Beard El-Dinary, Pressley, & Schuder, 1992). Certainly, the decontextualized teaching of individual strategies for a short period is not likely to have long-term impact on students or to effectively help them develop as strategic readers (Gaskins, 1994; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992).

The purpose of this article is to describe how a version of this global approach to teaching strategic reading is working successfully in one ESL classroom.

ONE ESL CLASSROOM: HOW WE APPROACH GROUP READING ACTIVITIES

I teach a reading lab class in an intensive university-level English program. The intensive program is designed to prepare students for mainstream study at either the graduate or the undergraduate level. The reading lab is one of a number of skills courses that supplement a content-based curriculum. In the reading class, we offer several activities: group reading,

word-recognition exercises, and individualized reading, as well as work with vocabulary. I will focus on the group reading activities in this article.

Because this reading class is oriented toward instruction in one skill, it was not possible to embed strategy teaching entirely in content instruction, where all four skills would be addressed. The next-best alternative was to focus on one text for the course of a semester so that some of the benefits of content instruction could be present (e.g., heightened knowledge of a given topic and recurring vocabulary, both of which aid in reading comprehension). The text I selected was *Special Effects in the Movies* (Powers, 1989), a book written for high school students who are native speakers of English. While using this approach to teaching reading strategies in an earlier semester, I found *Special Effects* to be on an appropriate level for a similar group of students. The topic has also proved to be a fruitful one because all of the students in the class have seen many movies and can make immediate and extended connections between their own background knowledge and the text content.

CLASSROOM PROCESSES

Effective instruction in strategic reading entails a number of classroom processes or moves. I see five (which overlap to a certain extent) as primary. These are:

1. general strategy discussion
2. teacher modeling
3. student reading
4. analysis of strategies used by the teacher or by students when thinking aloud
5. explanation/discussion of individual strategies on a regular basis.

I organized my class activities to reflect these processes.

GENERAL STRATEGY DISCUSSION

In general strategy discussion, reading strategies and strategic reading are defined. The teacher explains and the class discusses why learning and practicing strategies are important. The following three points are examples of what I try to elicit from students: (1) Strategies help to improve reading comprehension as well as efficiency in reading; (2) By using strategies, students will be reading in the way that expert readers do; (3) Strategies help readers to process the text actively, to monitor their comprehension, and to connect what they are reading to their own knowledge and to other parts of the text.

I use this type of discussion not just in initial class periods as a part of explaining the method I am using to approach reading, but also on a recurring basis to ensure that students are aware of the value of what they are doing, and to ensure that they are connecting their progress in reading to the use of strategies. Another goal of our general discussions about the value of strategies is to encourage transfer of training to other reading tasks. Although initially the teacher may need to explain the value of using strategies, the students are soon able to relate their own views on strategies and strategy use. Through discussion, students gain a deeper understanding of their reading behavior, and they come to realize that they use strategies in reading in their L1.

TEACHER MODELING

A second important feature of strategy instruction is regular teacher modeling of expert behavior. In doing this, I read aloud a short portion of the text, and, as I do so, I think aloud. Here is a short excerpt from a transcript early in the semester. (Words in italics represent the actual text.)

Okay, um, the chapter, the title of the chapter is *Dreams and Screams* – um, well, what does that mean? Um. I know the book is about special effects, but what, why is the chapter called *Dreams and Screams*? I don't know. *Movies have always had the power to make people believe that what they are seeing on screen is really happening.* Okay, so is this what the author means by special effects? I don't know. Um, okay. *Special effects add to that power.* Oh, so the author means that movies without special effects make people believe they're seeing what's on the screen, but special effects make those movies more surprising, more amazing. (Someone says "um-hum".) *By using special effects, filmmakers make "impossible" scenes seem real.* Okay, so movies seem real when we watch them, and special effects can make impossible things seem real. So maybe the author will say next what impossible things can seem real. . . . *Through special effects, filmmakers have shown actors parting the waters of the Red Sea, flying to distant planets, and chopping off heads on Friday the 13th.* Okay, so I was right. The author is giving examples of special effects, impossible things that can seem real.

Here I can be observed using several strategies, which include asking questions, making predictions, checking those predictions, and summarizing or paraphrasing.

STUDENT READING

I also encourage students to read and think aloud from the very beginning, though I expect that familiarity with this process will take time. Reading and thinking aloud presents a very high cognitive load for L2 readers, yet not an impossible one. Here is an example of one student reading, also taken from early in the semester. (Words in italics represent the actual text.)

The title of the next is "*Simple mattes*" . . . And, so I think it would be, explain something more about, uh, this kind of special effect. *In its, in its simplest form, a matte is a black card held in front of the camera lens. This matte card can have many different shapes.* I think he, he's going to explain some more about the, um, maybe technical, some information. *It can be used to cover a large part of the image or just a small part, like a window or doorway. When a camera operator photographs a scene, the area hidden behind the matte, the matte card does not show up on the filmed image.* I was almost right, he's, uh, he was explaining the, the use, how do they use, how they use this kind of effect. I think that the next we can, maybe we can find some example.

In this excerpt, the reader can be heard predicting and checking the correctness of her predictions.

ANALYSIS OF STRATEGY USE

After the students or I have read a portion of the text, we immediately analyze the strategy use of the reader through full class discussion: What did the reader do, and when did he or she do it? What strategies did the reader use? Analyzing the teacher's reading is a step toward ensuring that the students get the full benefit from the teacher's modeling behavior. By discussing what the teacher did, they will be better able to incorporate effective strategy use into their own reading. When a student's reading is under discussion, the

TABLE 1. SAMPLE STRATEGIES TAKEN FROM STUDENTS' OWN WORK

| What | When | Why |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Connecting | While reading | To clarify ideas |
| • What I already know (to) what I'm reading | After reading | To help paraphrase |
| • Previous part (to) what I'm reading | | To evaluate content |
| Evaluating | While reading | To judge the author's idea |
| | After Reading | To make own opinion |
| | | To develop knowledge |
| Asking questions | While reading | To evaluate |
| | Before reading | To check |
| | | To have more interest |
| Checking for answers to questions | While reading | To pay attention to what I'm reading |
| Translating | While reading | To get exact meaning |

identification and analysis of strategy use is intermixed with teacher feedback on the reader's behavior. This feedback can include prompting to use specific strategies or eliciting suggestions from other students as to what strategies might be helpful in solving comprehension problems.

STRATEGY EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION

The process of strategy identification and feedback entails the naming of strategies and repeated explanations on the teacher's or students' parts as to how to use the strategies. The explanation process can be facilitated by use of graphic organizers such as the one in Table 1. From the first session, I ask the students to write down the strategies I or other readers use, as well as when they were used, as soon as each section of reading is completed. After they have written down this information individually, we name the strategies as a class and discuss their value, that is, why they should be used. After a few weeks of this type of discussion, I ask the class to work in small groups and to fill in charts such as the one in Table 1, with three columns headed: What, When, and Why. The examples are taken from charts made by the students themselves.

In subsequent sessions, we add to the charts, and at intervals during the semester we revamp them completely. In this way, the students can remember the array of strategies we have covered, and we can also discuss how the strategies interconnect. The charts are always mounted on the chalkboard during class and serve as reference lists for strategies that have been used, or could be used, while reading.

HOMEWORK

Strategy use is reinforced outside the classroom through two types of homework. In the first type, students finish reading the material that we have begun in class and respond to various written prompts. Before finishing the chapter, they may preview the rest of the

assigned text and predict what it will be about. While reading, they note questions they have and describe what other strategies they are using or could be using while they read. After reading, they can summarize the chapter and predict what future chapters will be about. At the same time that they use these strategies, they also explain why using them is helpful or worthwhile. In this way, strategy homework does not become simply rote skill learning but requires thought and concentration. In the second type of homework, students keep track of the reading they do outside of class for pleasure or for other courses. They note down what they have read, how much they have read, what strategies they have used in reading, and their evaluation of the text. This type of homework is meant to reinforce strategic behavior and to encourage transfer of strategy training to other tasks. In completing these assignments in recent semesters, students listed a wide variety of strategies, as can be seen in the list in Table 2. Their evaluations of the texts also indicated that they were reading in an attentive, thoughtful manner. Occasionally, the students would note that they had not used any strategies to read a given text. This point makes it probable that the strategies the students did list were ones they had genuinely employed and that they did not simply put them down after the fact to finish off a homework assignment.

TABLE 2. STUDENT-GENERATED STRATEGY LIST

| Title | How Much to Read | Evaluation | Strategies Used |
|---|------------------|--|---|
| <i>Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America</i> | 20 pages | Interesting issues of different kinds of intolerance Lack of background but very interesting stories, written with simple style | Skim – look at pictures and heading Predict Check predictions Ask questions of the author and of the teacher in class Underline Use dictionary Guess Take notes Translate |
| <i>Harriet Tubman: Freedom Girl</i> | All the book | The issue was interesting and the book was written in an easy style Very complete about the personal story, but not about historical events | Predict Check predictions Underline Take notes Ask questions Paraphrase |
| <i>“Flex Time – Meet the Ultimate Body Builder”</i> | Whole article | It was more difficult than the text which we used in class, a lot of metaphors, different text structure, a lot of new vocabulary | Reread Think about (text) structure Ask questions Use the dictionary |

CONCLUSION

I have used this approach with high-intermediate level university students, but it has potential for students at any level of instruction. It should be emphasized that transactional teaching, the basis for the method I am describing, was originally designed for elementary school classrooms. In adapting instruction in strategic reading from an L1 situation to an L2 environment, a very important issue to consider is how fast the teacher should introduce new strategies. The rate depends mostly on whether the students appear to be identifying strategies easily and articulating strategy use as they read. Another factor to consider is how much information about strategic reading should be explained, rather than elicited. When students are already proficient in reading in their L1, they are often immediately able to relate what we are doing with strategies in English to their reading behavior in their L1. This would not be the case with younger students, who may need more direct explanation about the meaning and value of strategies. The results of using this method to date have been very positive. In class, all the students are able to read and think aloud, articulating strategy use as they go. They can identify strategies that other readers have used, as well as come up with convincing reasons why these strategies are important. When students fill out charts describing the reading they do outside of class, they identify strategies they have used. In class, students have said that strategy training helps them to understand their reading process better, in both their L1 and their L2.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Angela Barker, Bill Grabe, and Sarah Rilling for reading this article and providing helpful comments.

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CHAPTER 28

Extensive Reading: Why Aren't We All Doing It?

Willy A. Renandya and George M. Jacobs

INTRODUCTION

Applied linguists have in recent years begun to move away from a preoccupation with the best methods of language teaching to a view that seeks to better understand the nature of language learning and teaching. Rather than introducing new methods of teaching, they are now more concerned with describing language pedagogy that is based on a principled understanding of second language learning. Brown (Chapter 1 of this volume) and Kumaravadivelu (1994), for example, have proposed a set of teaching/learning principles to which any good language pedagogy should conform. Examples of these principles include providing a rich linguistic environment, respecting and capitalizing on learners' contribution to the learning process, and emphasizing fluency over, but not at the expense of, accuracy (see Richards, Chapter 14 of this volume).

Extensive reading (ER), with its emphasis on encouraging learners to read self-selected, large amounts of meaningful language, fits well with current principles for good second and foreign language pedagogy (Grabe, Chapter 26 of this volume; Day & Bamford, 1998). In this paper, we briefly describe what ER is, how it is different from intensive reading, what its learning benefits can be for students, and what theories underpin ER. The paper also discusses some of the reasons why many teachers are still not implementing ER.

WHAT IS EXTENSIVE READING?

According to Carrell and Carson (1997, pp. 49–50), “extensive reading . . . generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer readings (e.g., whole books) for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being

read than on the language.” Although this definition provides an overview of ER, Davis (1995, p. 329) offers one description of ER from an ELT classroom implementation perspective:

An extensive reading programme is a supplementary class library scheme, attached to an English course, in which pupils are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks. Thus, pupils are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of books is being read in the time available. The watchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected for their attractiveness and relevance to the pupils’ lives, rather than for literary merit.

Although ER programs come under different names, including Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF), and the Book Flood Approach (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), they all share a common purpose: that learners read large quantities of books and other materials in an environment that nurtures a lifelong reading habit. In addition, these programs share a common belief that the ability to read fluently is best achieved through an instructional program that emphasizes reading extensively in the language.

ER differs from intensive reading. In intensive reading, students normally work with short texts with close guidance from the teacher. The aim of intensive reading is to help students obtain detailed meaning from the text, to develop reading skills – such as identifying main ideas and recognizing text connectors – and to enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge. It is important to note that these two approaches to teaching reading – intensive and extensive reading – should not be seen as being in opposition, as both serve different but complementary purposes (Carrell & Carson, 1997; Nuttall, 1996).

What are the characteristics of successful ER programs?¹ The following characteristics are generally thought to be among the most important (Bamford & Day, 1997; Davis, 1995; Hill, 1997; Hsui, 1994; Jacobs, Davis, & Renandya, 1997; Waring, 1997; Yu, 1993).

STUDENTS READ LARGE AMOUNTS OF MATERIAL

This is one of the key features that distinguishes extensive from intensive reading programs. In ER, teachers attempt to build a reading culture in which students read in quantity. The program will not obtain optimal benefits unless students are “hooked” on reading. In a study we recently completed, quantity of reading was the single most important predictor of students’ gain scores (Renandya, Rajan, & Jacobs, 1999).

STUDENTS USUALLY CHOOSE WHAT THEY WANT TO READ

With highly motivated students, this feature is easy to achieve. With less motivated learners, however, the availability of materials that they do like to read can make a lot of difference. These learners usually do not read much. To get them hooked on reading, they need access to a good collection of books and other materials that they want to read. Unfortunately, the kind of material that these students are more likely to pick up (e.g., ghost stories, comics, and the like) may be hard to find, or even nonexistent, in schools (Richards, Thatcher, Shreeves, Timmons, & Barker, 1999; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). Although we are stating that student choice of reading materials should be the norm, a place does exist for ER in which the entire class reads the same book.

READING MATERIALS VARY IN TERMS OF TOPIC AND GENRE

Students should be exposed to different types of materials so that they become familiar with different kinds of genre and accustomed to reading for different purposes and in different ways. Although younger learners may prefer fiction, they should gradually be introduced to nonfiction. Although a good selection of fiction often can be found, there is a relative scarcity of nonfiction materials for less proficient readers. Even scarcer are materials for adult learners who want to read simplified materials on such topics as law, business, technology, and medicine.

THE MATERIAL STUDENTS READ IS WITHIN THEIR LEVEL OF COMPREHENSION

Unlike in intensive reading, where the material is typically above students' linguistic level, in ER the material should be near or even below their current level. To use Second Language Acquisition (SLA) jargon, students should be reading texts at an $i + 1$, i , or $i - 1$ level, with " i " being their current proficiency level. The rule of thumb here is that to get students started in the program, it is better that they read easier texts than more challenging ones. For students who have had minimal exposure to contextualized language and who lack confidence in their reading, even $i - 2$ material may be appropriate, at least at the initial stage of the ER program.

STUDENTS USUALLY TAKE PART IN POSTREADING ACTIVITIES

The most commonly reported postreading task that teachers employ is, unfortunately, that of summary writing or book review. This task is not without value, but because writing a summary is time-consuming and often dreaded by students, it should be used less often. Other less laborious and potentially more inviting postreading tasks can be fruitfully used. These include asking students to

- design a bookmark to suit the book
- role-play the story
- design a poster to advertise the book
- read interesting/exciting/well-written parts aloud
- copy interesting words and useful expressions into a notebook
- write a letter to the author
- share their views about the book with a small group of classmates

TEACHERS READ WITH THEIR STUDENTS, THUS MODELING ENTHUSIASM FOR READING

We are less likely to be successful in encouraging our students to read if we ourselves do not read. This advice is particularly important when first beginning an ER program. We can show students the books or other materials we have just read or are reading, let them see us read silently, and read aloud to them from our favorite materials. This sends a strong message that we value reading and that our students should do the same (Campbell, 1989).

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS KEEP TRACK OF STUDENT PROGRESS

Ideally, students read on their own without the need for teachers to monitor their reading. However, regular monitoring is recommended, especially when working with reluctant readers. A simple book record can be designed to check students' progress. In addition to using book records, a monthly student-teacher conference can be scheduled to find out if students are having any problems with their reading. This conference can be as brief as

5 minutes or less. Monitoring should be seen as a way of displaying student progress and motivating students, rather than as a way for the teacher to *assess* them.

Finding the materials to suit the students' reading tastes as well as having a wide range of books at different levels can be difficult, especially where funding is insufficient. Lituañas (1997) describes how she collects materials from a wide variety of sources, including fellow teachers, past students, and community groups. Toh and Raja (1997) explain ways that teachers themselves can write ER materials suited to their students' cultural contexts and proficiency levels. Ways that students can be involved in creating reading materials for themselves and peers are explored in Davidson, Ogle, Ross, Tuhaka, and Ng (1997) and Dupuy and McQuillan (1997).

It is worth noting that not all writers on ER agree that postreading tasks should be included in the ER programs. The main objection is that postreading tasks take time away from reading and may spoil students' reading enjoyment, and that in ER, reading should be seen as its own reward. However, we feel that postreading tasks, if carefully designed, can serve useful purposes (see Yu, 1993, for a similar view). Postreading activities can be used to (1) reinforce what students have learned from their reading; (2) give students a sense of progress; and (3) help students share information about materials to read or avoid. The output hypothesis (Swain, 1993) provides additional support for the use of postreading tasks. This hypothesis states that although comprehensible input supplies an essential basis for second language acquisition, it must be supplemented by the production of comprehensible output if learners are to reach a high level of proficiency in the target language. Swain argues that production tasks push learners to notice features of the target language and to form and test hypotheses about the language.

Some educators use student groups to support ER. Group activities support reading interest and proficiency and can take place before, during, and after ER. For instance, Cockburn, Isbister, and Sim-Goh (1997) and Rodgers (1997) depict programs in which more proficient, often older readers, support less proficient, often younger students, in various literacy activities. McQuillan and Tse (1997) and Renandya, Rajan, and Jacobs (1999) describe group activities that provide readers with opportunities to discuss what they have been reading.

THE BENEFITS OF EXTENSIVE READING

ER is seen as offering many advantages (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1993; Nation, 1997), some of which are as follows:

1. enhanced language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and text structure
2. increased knowledge of the world
3. improved reading and writing skills
4. greater enjoyment of reading
5. more positive attitude toward reading
6. higher possibility of developing a reading habit

Rationales for these proposed advantages of ER range from the commonsense – we learn to x (in this case, read) by doing x (in this case, reading) – to the currently more esoteric, for example, chaos theory (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), which postulates that dynamic, complex, nonlinear systems such as human language are self-organizing, given sufficient input and feedback, and that reading provides one source of such input and feedback. A more common scholarly explanation of the benefits of ER argues that the human brain

contains innate potential for language learning of both L1 and L2s. This potential is known as language acquisition device or universal grammar (Chomsky, 1968). The large quantities of meaningful and comprehensible input provided by ER activate that potential, thereby fostering language acquisition, as learners induce the rules of grammar and other language elements, such as spelling, from the data they receive in their environment (Krashen, 1993). In first language acquisition, this innate ability enables young children to gain mastery of most of their first language's rules and a good deal of its vocabulary regardless of their socioeconomic status and intelligence.

We generally agree with this nativist view, and feel that the same processes come into play for the learning of second languages, but we also see the possible benefit of what interactionist theorists (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Swain, 1999) have proposed, namely, that although comprehensible input is an absolutely crucial condition for second language acquisition, it may by itself not be sufficient. The effectiveness of ER may be further enhanced by such means as students engaging in activities in which they talk and write about what they have read and will read (Renandya, Rajan, & Jacobs, 1999). This talking and writing can help make the reading more comprehensible and may provide a means for students to "infect" each other with the joy of reading. Talking and writing also push students to move from the receptive language competence needed for reading to the more demanding productive competence required for speaking and writing.

From a cognitive point of view (see Day & Bamford, 1998, Chapter 2, for an excellent summary), ER is particularly crucial in aiding the development of three of the most important components of fluent reading: a large sight vocabulary, a sizable general vocabulary, and knowledge of the target language and of the world. Sight vocabulary refers to words that readers can recognize quickly and effortlessly. This rapid and automatic process of word recognition is extremely crucial for reading. If this ability is lacking, subsequent reading processes are likely to be seriously impeded, which in turn makes comprehension difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, without possessing a large stock of vocabulary, reading becomes a frustrating dictionary-thumbing exercise that disrupts smooth processing of textual information. Although these two components are necessary, they do not by themselves make comprehension happen. This is where the third component comes into the picture, as comprehension depends to a large extent on the reader's prior knowledge of syntax, text structures, and the subject of the reading. The repeated exposure to massive amounts of written language afforded by ER is believed to help readers develop these three aspects of fluent reading.

WHY AREN'T WE ALL DOING EXTENSIVE READING?

ER is not new, yet although many of us would readily acknowledge the educational benefits of ER, how many of us are actually implementing it in our second language program? If ER is good for second language development, why isn't everybody doing it? According to Day and Bamford (1998), one of the most important reasons is that many teachers believe that intensive reading alone will produce good, fluent readers. As was mentioned earlier, in intensive reading students spend lots of time analyzing and dissecting short, difficult texts under the close supervision of the teacher. The aim of intensive reading is to help students construct detailed meaning from the text, develop reading skills, and enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge. This overemphasis on the explicit teaching of reading and language skills leaves little room for implementing other approaches. The intensive reading approach by itself, Day and Bamford further argue, may produce *skilled* readers but not skilled *readers*.

A related reason why ER is not done goes back to the whole paradigm issue of the role of the teachers: sages on the stage or guides on the side. Many teachers are perhaps still

uncomfortable with the idea of playing a “less” central role in the classroom. In intensive reading, instruction is more teacher-centered in that teachers are more center stage in what is happening in the classroom. They do lots of talking and decide what skills or strategies to teach, how these are taught, and what passages to use. In contrast, with ER, roles shift as teachers not only pass on knowledge, but also “guide students and participate with them as members of a reading community” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 47).

Other reasons for the relative absence of ER in second language instruction are more practical in nature. In our in-service courses, we often hear teachers saying that they do not have enough time to get students to read extensively because they feel pressured by the administration to cover the predetermined materials specified in the syllabus. Some others report that since ER is not directly assessed, they feel that curriculum time would be better spent on other subjects that students are tested on. Even in places where ER has been incorporated into the second language curriculum (e.g., Singapore), full implementation of the ER programs is hampered by these practical considerations. Careful examination of these implementation variables should receive more attention in future research.

CONCLUSION

We hope this article has motivated those of you who do not yet use ER or use it only a little to give ER a try or expand its use. We also hope that those of you who already are “extensively” using extensive reading have gained new ideas. We are confident that a growing number of applied linguists hold the view expressed by Eskey (1986, p. 21): “Reading . . . must be developed, and can only be developed, by means of extensive and continual practice. People learn to read, and to read better, by reading.” The benefits of ER, however, extend beyond the acquisition of reading fluency. After reviewing hundreds of research studies in both first and second language learning contexts, Krashen (1993, p. 23) boldly states that through extensive reading we “develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and . . . become good spellers.”

Beyond powerful gains in language proficiency, reading offers more. It offers a richer understanding of the world and a place in the ongoing, worldwide dialogue on a universe of topics open only to those who are literate and who exercise their literacy. Thus, ER represents much more than a teaching device. It represents a lifelong habit, a habit that brings with it the power and wealth that language offers in such large quantities. By encouraging our students to read extensively and showing them how to do so, we help them strengthen their grip on the efficacious tool of reading.

Acknowledgment

We wish to thank Lim Wai Lee, Patrick Gallo, and Jack Richards for their insightful comments on the earlier draft of this paper.

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Endnote

- ¹ A Web site exclusively dedicated to understanding and exploring ER in second language learning was established in 1999 (<http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/er/>). It houses a large annotated bibliography of works on ER and many other resources for developing successful ER programs, including information on setting up a program.